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ABSTRACT

The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) determines the openness or closedness of an organization from principals' perceptions of their schools' organizational climates; and the Assumed Similarity of Opposite Scales (ASOS) measures openness or closedness of interaction systems from principals' perceptions of the psychological distance from their faculties. After 35 elementary school principals had completed both rating scales, organizational climate and psychological distance were not found to be positively related as suggested by the hypothesis. (RA)

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Openness - Closedness: A Substantive Concept in Organizational Theory?

by Dr. Carl Helwig July 1969

According to social systems organizational theory, two dimensions, the normative and the personal, interacting with one another determined the nature of the human behavior within an organization. The normative dimension was said to be concerned with the social, while the personal dimension with the psychological aspects of this human interaction and within one such organization, the school, according to Halpin, the interaction between a principal and his faculty determined the nature of the school's organizational climate, that is, the nature of the normative and personal dimensions in interaction.[1]

This school organizational climate, moreover, could be empirically identified as being one of six prototypic climates, open autonomous, controlled familiar, paternal or closed. These six prototypic climates, furthermore, arrayed themselves along an openness to closedness continuum and, according to Halpin, the concept of openness, versus closedness in this arrayment was directly related to similar

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[1] J. W. Getzels and others, Educational Administration as a Social Process (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and A. W. Halpin, Theory and Research in Administration (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966). passim.

concepts about the openness to closedness of individual personality.[2]

Fiedler also formulated a variable, person-to-person psychological distance, which, he also held, related to the openness to closedness continuum.[3] Fiedler operationalized his variable with his Assumed Similarity of Opposite Scales (ASOS), and Halpin his school organizational climate variable with his Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ).

To test these two authors' assertions about the openness to closedness concept, twenty-five elementary school principals in the thirty-five Virginia Beach City School District each completed the ASOS as well as the OCDQ. Thus, each principals's own perception of his school's organizational climate was correlated by the non-parametric Spearman rho statistic with his perception of his own psychological distance with his faculty. In short, the more open the elementary school principal's perception of his school's organizational climate, as measured by the OCDQ, the less (or more open) would he also perceive his own psychological distance, as measured by the ASOS, toward his faculty to be.

[2]Halpin, loc. cit.

[3]F. E. Fiedler, Leader Attitudes and Group Effectiveness (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1968), passim.

This hypothesis was not upheld at the .05 level of acceptance. Therefore, with this sample at least, Halpin's openness - closedness construct, school organizational climate, did not correlate significantly with Fiedler's openness - closedness construct, psychological distance. From the results herein, the viability of the openness - closedness concept as a high order construct must remain undetermined.

In part, this inference is supported by the research of Croft, that is, openness - closedness as determined between the variables, dogmatism and leader behavior. Croft with a sample of principal's found no significant differences, (p .05) between their dogmatism scores, as measured by Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale, Form E, and their scores on leader behavior (initiating structure and consideration, as measured by Halpin's Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ).[4] Further proof, therefore, is needed that the openness - closedness concept is indeed a substantive one and indicated, at least partially, in Halpin's research with the OCDQ prototypic climates.

[4]J. C. Croft, "Dogmatism and Perceptions of Leader Behavior," Educational Administration Quarterly 1:3 (Autumn, 1965), 60-71.